

## **BRUSH WITH BOMB SUSPECTS DESCRIBED - Eyewitness Pointed Way For Suspects**

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Two men - one wearing a ball cap - pulled up to an Oklahoma City business in a Ryder rental truck. The driver - a man with a crew cut asked for directions.

"They wanted to know how to get to 5th and Harvey," an employee at the business recalled. "I didn't notice anything unusual."

Less than 30 minutes later, a monstrous explosion ripped through the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building at NW 5 and Harvey, killing more than 100 people and rocking businesses and homes for miles around.

Just that quickly, the employee of the downtown Oklahoma City business found himself a key eyewitness in an international FBI investigation into the worst act of terrorism in United States history.

The eyewitness told The Oklahoman on Friday he got a pretty good look at the driver, whom authorities now believe to be bombing defendant Timothy James McVeigh, 27.

The witness wishes he had gotten a better look at the passenger. The FBI now identifies that passenger as "John Doe 2," a man they desperately want to catch before he bombs again.

"You've got to understand, when I talked to them, I wasn't suspicious of anything," said the employee, who asked that neither he nor his business be identified because he fears for the safety of himself and his pregnant wife.

The witness says the business where he works is located on a busy intersection near downtown and it's not unusual for people to stop and ask for directions. He said he has given directions dozens of times and knows he has no reason to feel guilty.

"It doesn't bother me at all," he said, but added he does wonder from time to time whether there was something unusual he should have noticed.

Mostly, however, he spends his time trying to help the FBI catch the culprits.

One way he has helped is by viewing a lineup that included McVeigh.

"I picked out two people and one was him," the witness said. "The one I referred more of my decision toward was him."

"When they put you in a lineup, they don't make it easy on you," he said, referring to the fact authorities selected people for the lineup who looked similar to McVeigh. The Oklahoman was told soldiers from Fort Sill were chosen for the lineup because of their cropped haircuts.

The witness said he also helped the FBI prepare the second composite sketch of "John Doe 2" in which he was wearing a ball cap.

"I'm the cause of the hat," he said.

The witness said he could not recall what, if any, insignia was on the hat or even state its color.

The look he got of the second suspect was "not enough to help anybody," he said.

The witness said he didn't notice any other vehicle following the Ryder truck.

His account would seem to contradict reports that the bombers had scouted out their target in the days before the blast.

"The only thing I can figure is they got confused because they're not from here," the witness said.

McVeigh is the only one charged so far in the deadly bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building April 19.

However, two other men have been connected to McVeigh by agencies investigating the bombing.

On Friday, a group hired an attorney for James Nichols without his knowledge, holding up a hearing on whether he would be released on bond from charges he conspired to make explosives in Michigan with bombing suspect McVeigh.

Robert Elsey, a Grosse Pointe Park attorney hired by a group called Sanilac Concerned Citizens for Justice, conferred with Nichols in the hearing room at the federal prison in Milan. Nichols was given the choice of being represented by Elsey or by court-appointed lawyers.

Also accused of conspiring with McVeigh to make bombs is Terry Nichols, a Kansas resident and brother of James Nichols.

U.S. Magistrate Lynn Hooe adjourned the session until Tuesday to allow James Nichols time to decide on lawyers. No testimony was taken. Nichols will remain in custody.

FBI agents continued Friday to search for "John Doe 2."

McVeigh has been described as a drifter who liked gun shows and had ties to paramilitary groups. He was known to hold extreme right-wing views and favored camouflage clothes.

The bombing was on the second anniversary of the fiery end to a government siege of the Branch Davidian complex near Waco, Texas. More than 80 cult members died in the fire.

In other developments Friday:

Late Friday, police in Santa Monica, Calif., detained a man driving a car with an Oklahoma license plate who appeared to resemble a sketch of the second suspect in the bombing, "John Doe 2." The FBI was questioning the man, who was being held on an auto theft complaint, while a mug shot was being returned to Oklahoma for a witness to view.

The Associated Press reported a security camera videotape shows McVeigh's missing license plate on a mystery vehicle just minutes before the explosion.

The FBI has appealed for public help in finding the Arizona plate LZC-646, which had been on McVeigh's 1977 Mercury Marquis five days before the bombing. The plate was missing from the car when he was stopped by a state trooper 75 minutes after the blast.

The videotape shows another vehicle with the plate - not the Mercury - and also shows the Ryder truck believed to have carried the 4,800-pound bomb, a federal law enforcement source said.

FBI agents have checked two motels in Kingman, Ariz., where McVeigh stayed this year, and are investigating his associates there.

McVeigh checked into the Imperial Motel on March 31 and checked out the morning of April 12, said Helmut Hofer, owner of the motel. He said FBI agents were at the motel from Sunday through Thursday, analyzing the room where he stayed and seizing records.

McVeigh paid in advance for the full period, said Hofer, who thought his customer was in the military because he wore camouflage fatigues.

"It was an ordinary situation, nothing unusual," he said. "He stayed by himself. No calls came for him. If he made any, they must have come from outside."

McVeigh's trail picks up in Junction City, Kan., on April 14, when he checked into the Dreamland Motel. He stayed there until early the morning of April 18, the day before the bombing at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

In Kingman on Thursday, FBI agents searched room 119 of the Hilltop Motel, where McVeigh stayed from Feb. 12-17, said motel co-owner Dennis Schroeder.

Schroeder said McVeigh always wore camouflage fatigues.

"He was a perfect gentleman, said Hilltop co-owner Fred Paulson. "Everything you'd want a customer to be. He was quiet and polite and always addressed me as sir."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.